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Landslide near Eravikulam National Park

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Why in News

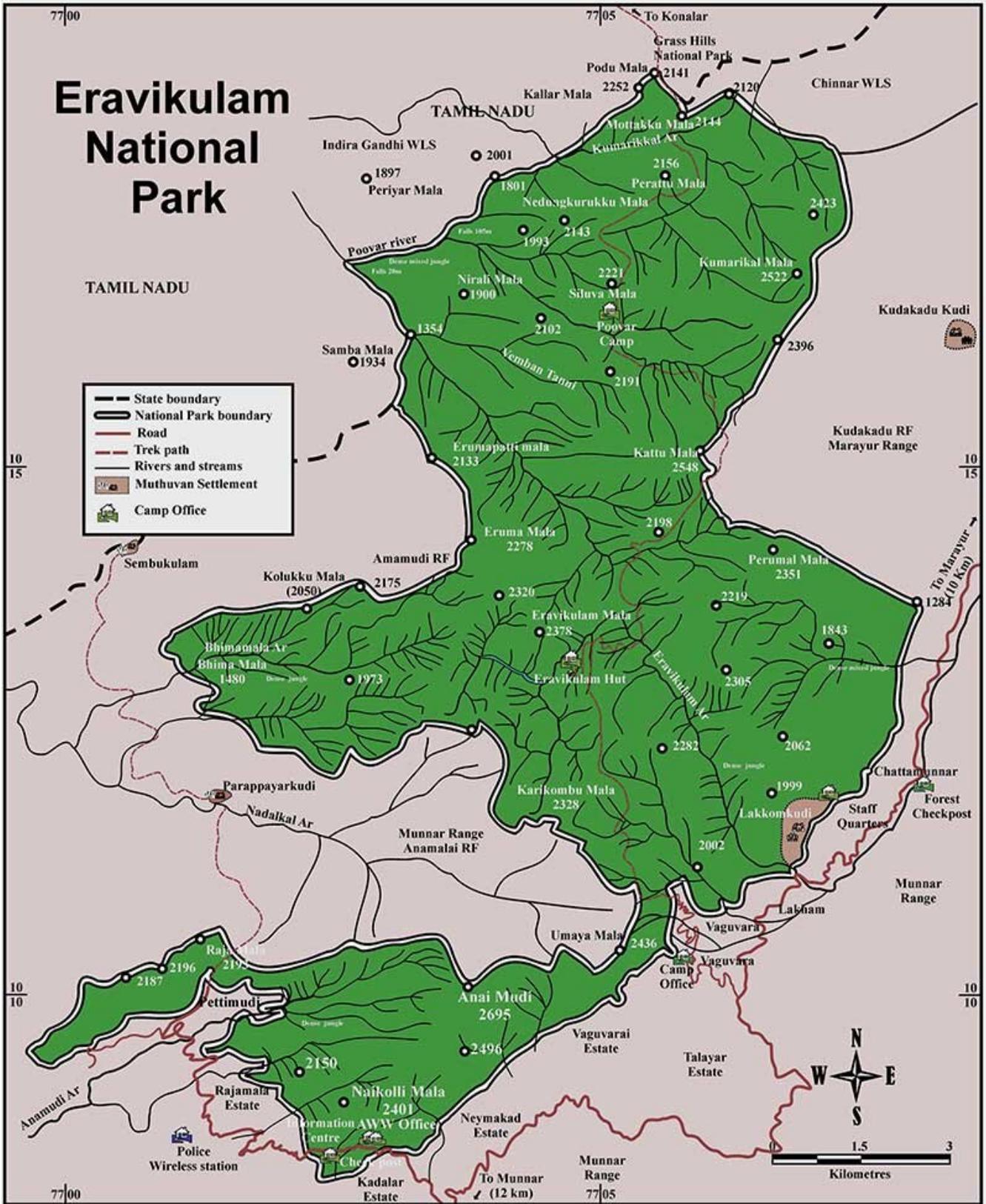
Recently, **landslides** have been reported at the **Nayamakkad tea estate** at Pettimudy which is located about **30 km from Munnar**, adjacent to the **Eravikulam National Park (ENP), Kerala**.

Key Points

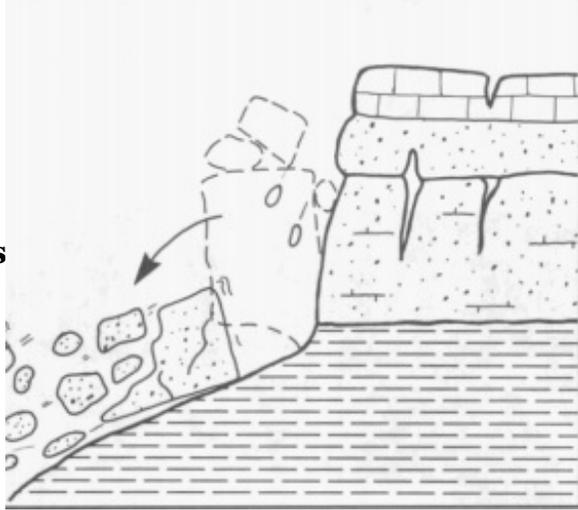
- **Features of ENP:**
 - It is located in the **High Ranges (Kannan Devan Hills) of the Southern Western Ghats** in the Devikulam Taluk of **Idukki District, Kerala**.
 - It spreads over an area of **97 square km** and hosts **South India's highest peak, Anamudi** (2695 m), in its southern area.
 - The **Rajamalai region** of the park stays open to the public for **tourism**.
- **History:**
 - The Government of Kerala acquired the area from the Kannan Devan Hills Produce Company under the **Kannan Devan Hill Produce (Resumption of lands) Act 1971**.
 - It was declared as **Eravikulam-Rajamala Wildlife Sanctuary in 1975** and was elevated to the status of a **National Park in 1978**.
- **Topography:**
 - The main body of the park comprises a **high rolling plateau** (plateau at different elevation or with varying heights) **with a base elevation of about 2000 m** from mean sea level.
 - Three major types of **plant communities** found in the park are: **Grasslands, Shrub Land and Shola Forests** (mosaic of montane evergreen forests and grasslands).

The park represents the **largest and least disturbed stretch of unique Montane Shola-Grassland vegetation** in the Western Ghats.

- **Flora:**
 - It houses the special **Neelakurinji flowers** (*Strobilanthes kunthianam*) that **bloom once every 12 years** and the next sighting is expected to be in 2030.
 - Apart from that, it has rare terrestrial and epiphytic orchids, wild balsams, etc.
An epiphyte is an organism that **grows on the surface of a plant** and **derives its moisture and nutrients from the air, rain, water or from debris** accumulating around it.
- **Fauna:**
 - The park holds the **largest viable population of the endangered Nilgiri Tahr** (*Nilgiritragus hylocrius*).
 - It has other little known fauna such as Nilgiri Marten, Ruddy Mongoose, Small Clawed Otter, Dusky Striped Squirrel, etc.
- **Significance:**
 - It is **regionally important** as a **catchment area for both east** (tributaries of River Pambar) and **west** (tributaries of River **Periyar** and **Chalakkudy**) **flowing rivers**.
 - **Locally**, it is important for **maintaining the climate and providing drinking water** to the surrounding estates and for **irrigation**.
- **Proximity:** The park is in continuity with the neighboring **Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary**, Anamudi Shola National Park, Pampadum Shola National Park, Kurinjimala Sanctuary and **Anamalai Tiger Reserve**.



Landslides



- A landslide is defined as the **movement of a mass of rock, debris or earth down a slope**. Landslides are a type of **mass wasting** (a geomorphic process) which denotes any down-slope movement of soil and rock under the direct influence of gravity.
- **Causes:** Slow weathering of rocks as well as soil erosion, earthquakes and volcanic activity.
- Continent-wise, **Asia suffers the maximum damages/losses** due to landslides and within that, **South-Asian nations are the worst sufferers including India** which is one of the worst affected by landslides.

Source: TH